

## Chapter 6

# Knowledge Workers' Social Media Usage as a Personal Knowledge Management Tool

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for “profiling knowledge workers’ mainstream social media usage” and “investigating knowledge workers’ mainstream social media usage for personal knowledge management purposes”. For this purposes, it seeks to analyse the social media usage for personal knowledge management purposes of 365 knowledge workers who work in private sector organisations in Turkey. Frequency statistics and factor analysis are conducted on to the data collected on SurveyMonkey. Two factors emerge from this analysis which are named as ‘Sharing and Creating New Knowledge’ and ‘Harnessing Professional Knowledge’.*

### INTRODUCTION

*...There is a central difference between the old and new economies: the old industrial economy was driven by economies of scale; the new information economy is driven by the economics of networks... – Shapiro & Varian; 1993:173*

Famous futurist Alvin Toffler (1980) describes the post-industrial society as ‘The Third Wave’ which grounds on ‘knowledge’ as the primary resource. According to him, all organisations are operating and employees are working not only in the infosphere, but also in the technosphere and the sociosphere. By infosphere, Toffler refers to the global knowledge and information dissemination network. Toffler defines technosphere as all the elements of technological ecosystem and by sociosphere, he refers to interrelated social institutions. People are effected by these changing environments and change their workplace behaviours hereunder to these environments.

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According to Naisbitt (1994), technological revolution is the driving power of the new economy. Thus, in the 21st century, work-based paradigm shifted to individual-based paradigm. As the global economy grows day by day without restriction of the technological developments, individuals -as global actors of the new economy- gain relative importance and power compared to the other actors. New knowledge is created from the existing knowledge by common sharing activities on the digitalsphere and individuals who have internet connection can reach all the open source information and knowledge easily on this digitalsphere. As a fact that, from Industrial Age to Information Age; capability, learning and flexibility became the essential facets of individuals to compete in the global workplace. Also some authors (Anderson, 2012; Rifkin, 2011; Rifkin 2014) define this new age as “Third Industrial Revolution” and explain it as ‘the industrialization of information age’. Anderson (2012) also mentions knowledge as a open source in a futurist paradigm and explains how people will use and share knowledge to create new ideas, methods, techniques and productions.

Peter Drucker (1989), one of the management gurus, describes today’s employees as ‘knowledge workers’ -which are called as gold-collars- by explaining them as the main factors of the modern economy. Knowledge workers work in the global knowledge economy, Drucker (1989) described it as ‘the information capitalism’, which is creativity-based. And by creativity, he refers to generating new knowledge from existing knowledge and using it in the work-related activities. The global dynamic and ever-changing environment, with technological resources, brings continuous change, transformation and development. Having knowledge and using it effectively are the key factors of ‘staying alive in the dynamic workplace’ and ‘competing to others’. Technological developments and innovations empower employees. These developments also challenge them to go further, harness new innovative ways of thinking, working and being creative. In this multi-sphere, dynamic and challenging world, collecting information, processing and turning it into ‘knowledge’ is survival and essential for both organisations and individuals who work for organisations. Thus, it is essential to understand social media usage for knowledge management purposes as investigated in this chapter by individual level.

This chapter provides a comprehensive view of the literature background of Web 2.0, social media and personal knowledge management (PKM). It also has a relevant research study on the topic. Data have been collected from 365 knowledge workers in Turkey who work in various private sector organisations such as manufacturing, health services etc. Their usage of mainstream social media platforms for PKM purposes are discovered by using Sigala and Chalkiti’s (2015) scale with additional items. The study first covers the relevant literature background on social media and PKM followed by methodological design of the study. With the findings, implications and concluding remarks of the study, it is aimed to provide a useful insight, to determine the current state and to shed a light on the future opportunities for both researchers and practitioners in the academia and the industry.

## **BACKGROUND**

In today’s world, individuals live in a network society that enhances organisational and personal knowledge, creativity and learning capacity. The most important characteristic of this network society is that knowledge can easily be harnessed and shared. To understand the relationship between social media and PKM, first, it is important to understand the concept and context of the topics.

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